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**Everything you always wanted to know about sex (in IR)
but were afraid to ask: The 'Queer Turn' in International
Relations**

Journal:	<i>Millennium</i>
Manuscript ID	MJIS-2017-0073.R2
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Keyword:	Queer, Foucault, LGBT
Abstract:	<p>Queer IR's momentum in the past four years has made it inconceivable for disciplinary IR to make it 'appear as if there is no Queer International Theory.' The 'queer turn' has given rise to vibrant research programs across IR subfields. Queer research is not only not a frivolous distraction from the 'hard' issues of IR, but queer analytics crack open for investigation fundamental dimensions of international politics that have hitherto been missed, misunderstood or trivialized by mainstream and critical approaches to IR. As queer research is making significant inroads into IR theorizing, a fault line has emerged in IR scholarship on sexuality and queerness. Reflecting the tensions between LGBT studies and queer theory in the academy more broadly, the IR literature on (homo)sexuality largely coalesces into two distinct approaches: LGBT and Queer approaches. The article will lay out the basic tenets of queer theory and discuss how it diverges from LGBT studies. The essay then turns to the books under review and focuses on the ways in which they take up the most prominent issue in contemporary debates in queer theory: the increasing inclusion of LGBT people into international human rights regimes and liberal states and markets. The article finishes with a brief reflection on citation practices, queer methodologies and the ethics of queer research.</p>

Everything you always wanted to know about sex (in IR) but were afraid to ask: The 'Queer Turn' in International Relations¹

Books reviewed

Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013, pp. 328, US\$26.95 pbk).

Manuela L. Picq, and Markus Thiel (eds), *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTQ claims shape International Relations*. (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2015, pp. 178, US\$44.95 pbk).

Rahul Rao, *Third World Protest: Between Home and the World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 288, US\$43.95 pbk).

Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations. Sexuality, Sovereignty and the Will to Knowledge*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 264, US\$29.95 pbk).

Introduction

Queer scholarship has produced some of the most innovative and widely cited² research on concepts, themes and practices considered indispensable to the study of International Relations (IR), including war and peace, geopolitics, sovereignty, colonialism, nationalism, soldiering, globalization, development and norm diffusion.³ In IR, it was not until very recently that major

¹ I would like to thank Alison Howell for her insightful feedback on previous drafts of this article. Thank you also to the two anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments and suggestions.

² Nicola J. Smith and Donna Lee, 'What's Queer About Political Science?', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 17, no. 1 (February 2015): 49–63. See also: Cynthia Weber, 'Why Is There No Queer International Theory?', *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 1 (2015): 2; Anthony J. Langlois, 'International Relations Theory and Global Sexuality Politics', *Politics* 36, no. 4 (2016): 385–399.

³ David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz. 'Introduction: What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?' *Social Text* 84/85, Vol. 23, no. 3–4, Fall–Winter (2005): 1–18; Melanie Richter-Montpetit and Cynthia Weber. 'Queer International Relations', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (2017): 1–40.

journals started to publish queer research. Yet Queer⁴ IR's momentum in the past four years has made it inconceivable for disciplinary IR to make it 'appear as if there is no Queer International Theory.'⁵ The 'queer turn' has given rise to vibrant research programs across IR subfields.⁶ As the books under review indicate, queer research is not only not a frivolous distraction from the 'hard' issues of IR,⁷ such as weapons proliferation and global financial crises, but queer analytics crack open for investigation fundamental dimensions of international politics that have hitherto been missed, misunderstood or trivialized by mainstream *and* critical approaches to IR. Rather than adding sexuality as another variable to orthodox IR frameworks, or 'simply' studying non-normative sexual practices and identities, and their (lack of) protection through human rights regimes, Queer IR investigates how the operations of international power are shaped by sexual norms and logics. Queer analytics have produced insights not only on the *political* character of sexual norms and logics, but also offer a more expansive notion of the political in international relations. Finally, Queer theory's refusal of a clearly bound referent object makes possible an engagement with 'regimes of the normal' beyond the sexual.⁸

As queer research is making significant inroads into IR theorizing, a fault line has emerged in IR scholarship on sexuality and queerness. Reflecting the tensions between LGBT studies and Queer theory in the academy more broadly, the IR literature on (homo)sexuality largely coalesces into two distinct approaches: LGBT and Queer approaches. LGBT perspectives tend to focus on LGBT people and/or study norms and struggles around LGBT human rights, often reflecting a liberal stance of advocating for LGBT inclusion in citizenship rights. By contrast,

<http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-265>.

⁴ Challenging notions of queer as fixed and/or an identity, queer research understands 'queer' as a verb rather than a noun. However, this article will capitalize 'queer' when referring to specific bodies of literature, such as Queer IR or Queer theory.

⁵ Weber, 'Why Is There No Queer International Theory?', 30.

⁶ For a comprehensive overview and discussion of Queer IR research, see Richter-Montpetit and Weber, 'Queer International Relations.'

⁷ I borrow that phrase from Stanton, 'Introduction: The Subject of Sexuality', In *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS*, ed. Stanton (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992): 2.

⁸ Eng et. al., 'Introduction'

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Queer theory is animated by a commitment to the radical contingency of the term 'queer'.⁹ Accordingly, Queer studies scholarship commonly refuses to limit itself to a bound referent object such as 'the LGBT.' LGBT studies have tended to question the analytical value and political significance of Queer theory.

In the introduction to their edited volume on 'Sexualities and World Politics: How LGBT claims shape International Relations', Manuela Picq and Markus Thiel echo these concerns about Queer theory being 'intellectually enriching' yet 'less apt' in political activism due to its 'elite' and 'academic' character.¹⁰ They explicitly distinguish LGBT perspectives from queer scholarship. While the individual chapters of the book take a variety of approaches, the editors are highly critical of queer research and instead advocate for what they term an LGBT perspective. Picq and Thiel challenge Queer theory for its limited concern with 'discourses', a research methodology they associate with a 'view [of] politics as secondary'¹¹, and as thereby leaving unchallenged 'material inequalities'.¹² Their critique is based on the premise that meaningful political activism is only possible based on 'identifiable categories to combat discrimination'.¹³

With many of the early canonized works in Queer theory having their disciplinary homes in philosophy and the humanities, important strands of queer theorizing in fact share(d) this view of 'queer' as 'inimical to empirical investigation'.¹⁴ This kind of queer scholarship associates fieldwork with essentialism, and cultural analysis with anti-essentialism.¹⁵ This review article will critically engage with these claims in relation to the four books under review and the 'queer turn' in IR more broadly. I will demonstrate that 1) Queer IR research cannot be reduced to post-structuralism, specifically deconstruction or a focus on 'discourses' and 2) that poststructuralist

⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰ Manuela Lavinias Picq and Markus Thiel, 'Introduction: Sexualities in World Politics.' In *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTQ Claims Shape International Relations*, edited by Manuela Lavinias Picq and Markus Thiel, 1–21. (London: Routledge, 2015): 6-8.
¹¹ Ibid., 14.
¹² Ibid., 8.
¹³ Ibid., 6.
¹⁴ Jin Haritaworn, 'Shifting Positionalities: Empirical Reflections on a Queer/Trans of Colour Methodology', *Sociological Research Online* 13, no. 1(13), (2008): 2-3.
¹⁵ Haritaworn, 'Shifting Positionalities', 3.

queer IR has produced rich empirical work, including of 'real world' struggles and contestations over LGBT rights.

The article proceeds in two sections. The first will lay out the basic tenets of queer theory and discuss how it diverges from LGBT studies. The essay then turns to the books under review. Rather than offer an evaluation of each work in question, this review article focuses on the ways in which these books take up the most prominent issue in contemporary debates in queer theory: the increasing inclusion of LGBT people into international human rights regimes and liberal states and markets. The section finishes with a brief reflection on citation practices, queer methodologies and the ethics of queer research.

What is Queer? And what is Queer about Queer IR?

Both Queer theory and LGBT studies challenge common sense 'assumptions about heterosexuality as the default sexuality and kinship norm ("heteronormativity")' and the twin premise 'of two "opposite" and complementary gender positions ("cissexism")'.¹⁶ While the 'queer turn' in IR is commonly associated with studying LGBT people and LGBT human rights, Queer theory is committed to the radical contingency of the term 'queer' and thus does not assume a pre-given (queer) subject that exists prior to politics that then seeks rights. The LGBT perspective sees LGBT people as pre-given rights-seeking subjects who enter a political field in order to seek those rights. By refusing to assume a stable 'LGBT' subject, Queer IR perspectives can instead inquire into how (queer) subject-making is a political process. Queer inquiry thus proceeds on the basis of questioning the political formations and normalizing power of sexuality and gender, rather than assuming a stable, rights-seeking, liberal political subject. Queer inquiry

¹⁶ Richter-Montpetit and Weber, 'Queer International Relations', 12. Queer IR research demonstrates the harmful effects of these sexual and gender ontologies, including in the context of sexual and gender-based violence (see Jamie J. Hagen, 'Queering Women, Peace and Security', *International Affairs* 92, no. 2 (March 2016): 313–32) and post-conflict reconstruction (see Marjaana Jauhola, *Post-Tsunami Reconstruction in Indonesia: Negotiating Normativity Through Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives in Aceh* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013); McEvoy, 'Queering Security Studies in Northern Ireland.' In *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTQ Claims Shape International Relations*, eds Picq and Thiel (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2015): 139–154.

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seeks to trouble and destabilize – *queer* – ‘regimes of the normal’ (‘normal’ vs ‘perverse’) and show their contingent and thus *political* character.¹⁷ At a minimum, Queer theory challenges understandings of gender and sexuality as singular and stable.

Queer theory’s refusal of a clearly bound referent object has produced insights not only on the mutually constitutive relationship between ‘normal’ and ‘perverse’ sexual subjects and practices, but has also made possible an engagement with ‘regimes of the normal’ beyond the sexual – nationally and transnationally. Conceptualizing sexuality and gender as part of wider relations of power and normalization, Queer/Trans of Color Critique¹⁸ - Queer and Trans scholarship rooted in Black feminist and Women of Colour feminist thought – has explored a wide range of pathologized sexual subjects and desires beyond the figure of the homosexual. This includes non-normative heterosexual subjects such as the figure of the Muslim terrorist¹⁹ or insurgent who is produced as dangerously perverted through discourses of racialization.

¹⁷ Eng et al., ‘Introduction’; V. Spike Peterson, ‘Towards Queering the Globally Intimate.’ *Political Geography* 56 (January 2017): 114; Anthony J. Langlois, ‘International Relations Theory and Global Sexuality Politics’, *Politics* (2015): 385-399.

¹⁸ The ‘label’ Queer of Color Critique was coined by Marxist sociologist and Black queer studies scholar Roderick Ferguson. Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in black: Toward a queer of color critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004). Native feminist and Two-Spirit theorists have challenged queer studies, including (much of) Queer/Trans of Color Critique, for the ‘present absence’ (Shanley, 1998; as cited in Smith & Kauanui, 2008, 244) of Indigeneity and genocide in the context of settler colonies like the United States. This erasure normalizes settler colonialism and genocide and is thus re/productive of colonial logics and formations. Andrea Smith and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, ‘Native feminisms engage American studies’ *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 241–249. See also Qwo-Li Driskill, ‘Doubleweaving Two-Spirit critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. (1-2) (2010): 69–92; Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck and Angie Morrill, ‘Decolonizing feminism: Challenging connections between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy’, *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1, (2013): 8–34.

¹⁹ Jasbir K. Puar and Amit Rai, ‘Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots’, *SocialText* 20, no. 3 (2002): 117–48; Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in QueerTimes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); In IR, see Nivi Manchanda, ‘Queering the Pashtun: Afghan Sexuality in the Homo-Nationalist Imaginary’, *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2015): 130–146; Patricia Owens, ‘Torture, Sex and Military Orientalism’, *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 7 (2010): 1041–56; Melanie Richter-Montpetit, ‘Beyond the Erotics of Orientalism: Lawfare, Torture and the Racial-sexual Grammars of Legitimate Suffering’, *Security Dialogue* 45 (2014a): 43–62; Melanie Richter-Montpetit, ‘Empire, Desire and Violence: A Queer Transnational Feminist Reading of the Prisoner “Abuse” in Abu Ghraib and the Question of “Gender Equality”’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9, no. 1 (2007): 38–59.

Given Queer theory's commitment to the radical contingency of the term 'queer,' some strands of Queer theory suggest that queer research is about any and all normativities. In IR, queer approaches are typically explicitly connected to political analyses of the workings of non-normative sexual and gender norms, practices, relations and or institutions while refusing to limit themselves to a bound referent object such as 'the LGBT'.²⁰ In the first comprehensive review of Queer IR scholarship, Melanie Richter-Montpetit and Cynthia Weber identify the following questions at the heart of the existing literature:

- 'How do cultural ideas about gender and sexuality shape foreign policy and military operations?
- How do the security and development needs of LGBT subjects become key terrains in geopolitical struggles around war and security as well as around human rights and norms diffusion?
- How do heteronormative, homonormative, and cisnormative frameworks inform the operations of the global political economy?
- How do normative understandings of gender and sexuality intersect with normative understandings of soldiering, militarism, and war to make "normal soldiers," "normal military policies," and "normal wars"?
- How do non-normative understandings of gender and sexuality intersect with understandings of racial difference and colonial forms of power to construct internationally dangerous figures—like "the terrorist" and/or "the insurgent"?
- How are processes of modern state formation connected to heteropatriarchal family relations and associated normativities of sexuality and gender?'²¹

While some Queer IR research studies the politics of LGBT human rights and/or explores the differential impact of security practices and economic policies on non-normative sexual and gendered subjects, what characterizes Queer IR scholarship is its treatment of queer as an *analytical* category.²² Rather than assuming a stable LGBT identity, Queer IR scholarship investigates how certain sexual norms, normativities and subjects are produced and come to be understood in binary terms, interrogating the political effects of this kind of either/or thinking and 'regimes of the normal.' This critique extends also to the heterosexual/homosexual and

²⁰ For a critique of the 'everything is queer' stance, see Cynthia Weber, *Queer International Relations. Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

²¹ Richter-Montpetit and Weber, 'Queer International Relations', 4-5.

²² See *ibid.* for an in-depth discussion.

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male/female dichotomies underwriting traditional LGBT and Gender studies, including some of the LGBT and Feminist perspectives in IR.

The rise of Queer theory is commonly associated with ‘the poststructuralist turn’ of the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, this concern with destabilizing – queering – fixed notions of sexuality and gender can be traced back to at least the 1970s and the scholarship of lesbian feminists, most of whom self-identified as Black and Women of Colour theorists.²³ In IR, scholars like V. Spike Peterson and Cynthia Weber published explicitly queer research as early as the mid-1990s.²⁴ Their work interrogated the heterosexism of nations and nationalisms as well as how states would actively use queerness in their international relations.²⁵ As I will discuss in the following section, while Queer IR scholarship is staunchly post-positivist, existing works subscribe to a wide range of theoretical approaches and research methods beyond poststructuralism and discourse analysis.

Queering (international) regimes of the normal beyond either/or

²³ Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (4th edition) (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012); Hazel Carby, ‘White woman listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood’ In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, & H. Tiffin (Eds.), *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (London: Hutchinson, 1982): 212–235; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Combahee River Collective, ‘The Combahee River Collective Statement’ In B. Smith (Ed.), *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983): 272–282; Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Audre Lorde, *Between Our Selves* (Point Reyes: Eidolon Editions, 1976); Audre Lorde, *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches by Audre Lorde* (New York: Crossing Press, 1984); Cherry Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (Eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (2nd ed.) (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1984); Barbara Smith, *Home girls: A black feminist anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983).

²⁴ V. Spike Peterson, ‘Political identities/nationalism as heterosexism’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1, no. 1 (1999): 34–65. Cynthia Weber, ‘Something’s Missing: Male Hysteria and the U.S. Invasion of Panama’, *Gender Journal* 19, no. 19 (1994a): 171-. Cynthia Weber, ‘Shoring up a sea of sign: how the Caribbean Basin Initiative framed the U.S. invasion of Grenada’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 125, no. 5 (1994b): 547–558. Cynthia Weber, ‘Performative States’, *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 27, no. 1 (1998a): 77–95. Cynthia Weber, ‘What’s so Queer about IR? Or Beware of the Sexuality Variable’, Presented at the *Millennium Annual Conference* (1998b). Cynthia Weber, *Faking It. U.S. Hegemony in a ‘Post-Phallic’ Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

²⁵ See *ibid.* for a more detailed discussion of these early works.

The increasing inclusion of (certain) LGBT subjects into international human rights regimes and liberal states and markets has come to constitute one of the most vibrant areas of debate in contemporary queer research.²⁶ While homo- and transphobia continue to be mobilized as powerful tools of statecraft,²⁷ an increasing number of state and non-state actors and institutions have come to endorse and promote LGBT rights and people. Under rubrics like 'homonormativity',²⁸ 'homonationalism',²⁹ 'pinkwashing',³⁰ and "homocolonialism,"³¹ Queer scholarship examines the ways in which these reconfigurations of sexual norms and normativities ('the respectable LGBT') shape national and transnational political and economic orders.³² In IR, a burgeoning body of literature explores how both anxieties about non-normative sexualities and genders, and LGBT rights advocacy have come to constitute important battlefields in contemporary struggles over the universality of human rights,³³ norm diffusion,³⁴

²⁶ For one of the earliest pieces of queer scholarship theorizing how queerness is not simply treated as abject in Global Politics but actively harnessed in support of hegemonic geopolitics, see Weber, *Faking It*. See also Special Issue on this book in *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 45, no. 1 (2016).

²⁷ Meredith L. Weiss, and Michael J. Bosia, eds. *Global Homophobia: States, Movements, and the Politics of Oppression* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Michael J. Bosia, 'To love or to loathe: modernity, homophobia, and LGBT rights', In eds Picq and Thiel, *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTQ Claims Shape International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2015): 38-53.

²⁸ Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

²⁹ Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

³⁰ Jasbir K. Puar and Maya Mikdash, 'Pinkwatching And Pinkwashing: Interpenetration and Its Discontents', *Jadaliyya* (2012). http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6774/pinkwatching-and-pinkwashing_interpenetration-and-;_Heike_Schotten_and_Haneen_Maikey_/_Queers_Resisting_Zionism:_On_Authority_and_Accountability_Beyond_Homonationalism_ (2012) Accessed October 8, 2016. <http://alqaws.org/articles/Queers-Resisting-Zionism-On-Authority-and-Accountability-Beyond-Homonationalism>.

³¹ Momin Rahman, 'Queer Rights and the Triangulation of Western Exceptionalism', *Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 3 (2014): 274-89.

³² Recent Queer IR scholarship examines how the figure of the 'respectable LGBT' is produced in relationship to structures of settler colonialism (see: Darcy Leigh, 'Post-Liberal Agency: Decolonizing Politics and Universities in the Canadian Arctic', *PhD thesis* (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2015); Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 'Beyond the Erotics of Orientalism: Homeland Security, Liberal War and the Pacification of the Global Frontier', *PhD thesis* (PhD diss., York University, 2014) and anti-Blackness (Anna M. Agathangelou, 'Neoliberal Geopolitical Order and Value: Queerness as a Speculative Economy and Anti-Blackness as Terror', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15, no. 4 (2013): 453-76; Richter-Montpetit, *Beyond the Erotics of Orientalism*, 2014a).

³³ Cai Wilkinson and Anthony J. Langlois, 'Special Issue: Not Such an International Human Rights Norm? Local Resistance to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights - Preliminary Comments', *Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 3 (2014): 249-55; Anthony J. Langlois, 'Human

foreign policy and the geopolitics of military interventions,³⁵ terrorism and counter-terrorism,³⁶ border security,³⁷ migration,³⁸ soldiering,³⁹ regional integration⁴⁰, global medicine⁴¹ and neoliberal development policy and restructuring⁴².

rights, "orientation," and ASEAN', *Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 3 (2014): 307-321; Cai Wilkinson, 'Putting "Traditional Values" Into Practice: The Rise and Contestation of Anti-Homopropaganda Laws in Russia', *Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 3 (2014): 363-79.

³⁴ Phillip M. Ayoub, 'With Arms Wide Shut: Threat Perception, Norm Reception, and Mobilized Resistance to LGBT Rights', *Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 3 (2014): 337-62; Phillip M. Ayoub, *When States Come Out. Europe's Sexual Minorities and the Politics of Visibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

³⁵ Agathangelou, 'Neoliberal Geopolitical Order and Value'; Weber, Faking it.

³⁶ See: Manchanda, 'Queering the Pashtun'; Owens, 'Torture, Sex and Military Orientalism'; Richter-Montpetit, 'Empire, Desire and Violence', 2007; Richter-Montpetit, 'Beyond the Erotics of Orientalism', 2014a; Melanie Richter-Montpetit, 'Why Torture When Torture Does Not Work? Orientalism, Anti-Blackness and the Persistence of White Terror', *The Disorder Of Things*, January 21, (2015). [https://thedisorderofthings.com/2015/01/21/why-torture-when-torture-does-not-work-orientalism-anti-blackness-and-the-persistence-of-white-terror/..](https://thedisorderofthings.com/2015/01/21/why-torture-when-torture-does-not-work-orientalism-anti-blackness-and-the-persistence-of-white-terror/)

³⁷ Laura J. Shepherd and Laura Sjoberg, 'Trans-Bodies in/of War (s): Cisprivilege and Contemporary Security Strategy.' *Feminist Review* 101, no. 1 (2012): 5-23.; Lauren B. Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence: Theorizing Embodied Subjects in International Relations*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

³⁸ Meghana Nayak, *Who Is Worthy of Protection?: Gender-Based Asylum and U. S. Immigration Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); V. Spike Peterson. 'Sex Matters: A Queer History of Archives.' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16, no. 3 (July 2014): 389-409.

³⁹ Aaron Belkin, *Bring Me Men: Military Masculinity and the Benign Facade of American Empire, 1898-2001* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Sarah Bulmer, 'Patriarchal Confusion?: Making sense of gay and lesbian military identity.' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15, no. 2 (June 2013): 137-156; Carol Cohn, 'Gays in the Military: Texts and Subtexts.' *In The 'Man' Question in International Relations*, eds Marysia Zalewski and Jane L. Parpart (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 129-49; Jesse Paul Crane-Seeber, 'Sexy Warriors: The Politics and Pleasures of Submission to the State.' *Critical Military Studies* (February 2016): 1-15; Federica Caso, 'Sexing the Disabled Veteran: The Homoerotic Aesthetics of Militarism.' *Critical Military Studies*, May (2016): 1-18; Richter-Montpetit, 'Empire, Desire and Violence'; Richter-Montpetit, 'Beyond the Erotics of Orientalism', (2014b).

⁴⁰ Catherine Baker, 'The "Gay Olympics"? The Eurovision Song Contest and the Politics of LGBT/European Belonging', *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 1 (2017): 97-121; Cynthia Weber, 'Queer Intellectual Curiosity as International Relations Method: Developing Queer International Relations Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks', *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2015): 11-23.

⁴¹ Alison Howell, 'The Global Politics of Medicine: Beyond Global Health, against Securitisation Theory', *Review of International Studies* 40, no. 5 (2014): 961-87.

⁴² See: Kate Bedford, *Developing Partnerships: Gender, Sexuality, and the Reformed World Bank* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Suzanne Bergeron, 'An Interpretive Analytics to Move Caring Labor Off the Straight Path.' *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30, no. 1 (2009): 55-64; Penny Griffin, 'Sexing the Economy in a Neo-Liberal World Order: Neo-Liberal Discourse and the (Re)Production of Heteronormative Heterosexuality', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 9, no. 2 (2007): 220-38; Amy Lind and Jessica Share, 'Queering Development: Institutionalized Heterosexuality in Development Theory, Practice and Politics', In *Feminist Futures: Re-Imagining Women, Culture and Development* (London: Zed

In her recent book *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge*, Cynthia Weber probes the entanglements between the most fundamental category of IR theory – sovereignty – and (homo)sexuality. Led by ‘a queer intellectual curiosity’, the book offers a path breaking intervention into IR scholarship on sovereignty challenging both the concept’s presumed singularity and its heteromascularity. Taking as her point of departure Richard K. Ashley’s famous poststructuralist takedown of orthodox IR theory’s notion of sovereignty, Weber investigates the contingency of ‘Man’ as the foundation of legitimate authority and political community in the Westphalian interstate system. Pushing beyond Ashley’s critique of ‘statecraft as mancraft’, she explores how this figure of the ‘sovereign man’ is not simply contingent but produced in relationship to *shifting* notions of homosexuality and the figure of the male homosexual. Following Foucault, Weber connects the emergence of ‘homosexuality’ as a discursive object to nineteenth century Western medical and legal discourses.

The poststructuralist work of Ashley on sovereignty, and Foucaultian IR scholarship in general, has neglected matters of sexuality and queerness, despite the fact that Foucault’s genealogy, on which they rely, demonstrates that the modern subject is fundamentally constituted through sex/uality. Seeking to remedy this oversight, Weber argues that one of the ways in which ‘sovereign man’ in discourses and practices of statecraft is constituted is in relationship to the Victorian figure of the ‘perverse homosexual.’ The book traces how this notion of the perverted homosexual has been reworked over time and yet continues to shape contemporary IR theories about modernization and development, and specifically recent discourses around immigration

Books, 2003); Amy Lind, ‘Querying Globalization: Sexual Subjectivities, Development, and the Governance of Intimacy’, In *Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites and Resistances*, eds Marchand and Runyan (London: Routledge, 2010): 48–65; Spike V. Peterson, ‘How (the Meaning of) Gender Matters in Political Economy’, *New Political Economy* 10, no. 4 (2005): 499–521; Rahul Rao, On ‘Gay Conditionality’, *Imperial Power and Queer Liberation* (2012), <http://kafila.org/2012/01/01/on-gay-conditionality-imperial-power-and-queer-liberation-rahul-rao/>; Rahul Rao, ‘Global Homocapitalism.’ *Radical Philosophy* 194 (2015): 38–49; Nicola Smith, ‘Toward a Queer Political Economy of Crisis’, In *Scandalous Economics: Gender and the Politics of Financial Crises*, eds Aida A. Hozic and Jacqui True, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 231–47.

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and security. She looks at four figures centred in these debates among both policymakers and IR scholars: the 'unwanted im/migrant', the 'terrorist', the 'underdeveloped' and the 'undevelopable', and examines the ways official foreign policy discourses construct these subjects as undesirable and dangerous.

Weber shows that the figure of the 'perverse homosexual' is increasingly accompanied by figurations of the 'normal homosexual.' For instance, over time the Obama administration's Foreign and National Security Policy figured the 'normal' or 'respectable LGBT' not only as a subject of inalienable human rights (figure of the 'gay rights holder'), but quite enthusiastically interpellated the figure of the 'gay patriot.'⁴³ Importantly, '[the] discursive production of the "LGBT rights holder" as the "normal homosexual" by Western states like the United States does not mean there are no longer "homosexuals" figured as perverse in international relations discourse.'⁴⁴ Rather the figure of the perverse homosexual continues to be mobilized, including by states that promote the respectable LGBT.⁴⁵

This approach sits in contrast to liberal LGBT scholarship, which views the rights-seeking subject as already pre-formed before entering the political field (in which it seeks equal inclusion and rights). Weber's analysis adds to vibrant debates in Queer studies and Queer IR on how non-normative gender and sexual formations shore up hegemonic geopolitical and economic projects, such as war, occupation and neoliberal austerity politics. However, Weber criticizes that much research about Western and non-Western calls for LGBT rights rests on 'universalized, reified understandings of neoliberalism and homonormativity.'⁴⁶ She argues that this 'either/or thinking'⁴⁷ has produced monolithic readings of shifting figurations of (homo)sexuality and queer politics, including in some of the cutting edge scholarship on

⁴³ See also Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Adi Kuntsman, *Figurations of violence and belonging: Queerness, migranhood and nationalism in cyberspace and beyond* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009); Melanie Richter-Montpetit. 'Beyond the Erotics of Orientalism: Homeland Security, Liberal War and the Pacification of the Global Frontier'.
⁴⁴ Weber, *Queer International Relations*, 105-6.
⁴⁵ Ibid.
⁴⁶ Ibid., 115.
⁴⁷ Ibid., 116.

homonationalism and 'the human rights industrial complex.'⁴⁸ Weber *queers* this 'binary logic of power' with the help of what she – drawing on Barthes' concept of the 'and/or' – calls 'queer logics of and/or.' This powerful analytic brings into focus the simultaneity of someone or something being one thing and/or another, for instance being simultaneously figured as the 'normal homosexual' *and* the 'perverse homosexual.' This queer plural logoi allows for more nuanced understandings of international formations of power that can capture these complexities. Contrary to Picq and Thiel's concern that queer approaches are politically impractical and elite, Weber's queer logics open the analytical and political imaginary for (the study of) queer-feminist 'resistive possibilities.'⁴⁹

Queer IR is an agenda-setting book by a scholar known for her powerful critiques of the boundaries of the discipline of IR and 'doing' IR. Rather than 'forget IR theory'⁵⁰, the book focuses in on and engages its object of critique with intention and care. While Weber challenges us to move beyond modes of Foucauldian IR that elide any consideration of sex/uality, at the same time, we may want to question the continued centering and (inadvertent) 'rescue' of Foucault in the book and Queer IR research more broadly. *Queer IR* of course references and agrees with postcolonial critiques of the Eurocentric character of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, and even though Weber pays attention to racism and racial discourses, the Foucauldian analytics of power and sexuality underwriting the book's overall analysis rest on a notion of Man or the human prior to racialization.⁵¹ Weber explores how Man is fundamentally constructed in relationship to sexuality, specifically the figure of the perverted homosexual, and how 'sexualized sovereign man' then intersects with race and gives rise to particular racialized figures ('the Al Qaeda terrorist'). By taking Foucault's *History of Sexuality* as her point of departure,

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 198.

⁵⁰ Roland Bleiker, 'Forget IR theory', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 22, no. 1 (1997): 57-85.

⁵¹ As I will discuss in the following paragraph, the path breaking study and critique of the fundamental raciality and coloniality of Man was developed by Black studies and Decolonial studies scholarship. For an excellent discussion of some of this literature, see: ed. Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

Weber's investigation into the will to knowledge about sexuality and the homo/sexual subject underestimates the extent to which the modern (homo/sexual) subject is always already racialized.

What other, less Eurocentric, theorists might be brought to bear in thinking through Queer IR? Rather than start (and end) with Foucault and/or the Foucauldian White queer scholarship of Sedgwick, Butler and Warner, Queer IR could engage (in more depth) with the robust Queer/Trans of Color scholarship⁵², which explores many of the themes and concepts at the heart of IR. Weber's queer analysis of the contingent, political and plural character of Man and of the associated 'will to knowledge' (diagnosed in the subtitle of the book) seeks to contribute (as the title of the concluding chapter suggests) to Foucault's 'the end of Man.' More productively, Queer IR scholarship could take as its starting point Frantz Fanon's 'end of the world.' Weber's important question 'Who is the homosexual?' would then be posed in relation to the question posed by Black studies and Decolonial scholarship: 'Who is the human?'⁵³

Paul Amar's book *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* is another excellent example for how queer analytics allow for rich empirical work that traces operations of contemporary global power beyond either/or logics. The book explores the rise of new and complex security regimes in the Global South by examining Cairo and Rio de Janeiro, two megacities at the forefront of such developments. At the heart of these security regimes is the rise of a new doctrine of human security that casts human rights as

⁵² Ferguson, *Aberrations in black*; Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible desires. Queer diasporas and South Asian public cultures* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005); Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir and Esra Erdem, 'Gay imperialism: Gender and sexuality discourse in the "war on terror"', In A. Kuntsman & E. Miyake (Eds.), *Out of place: Interrogating silences in queerness/raciality* (York: Raw Nerve, 2008): 71–95; Martin F. Manalansan IV, *Global divas: Filipino gay men in the diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press: 2003); Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with violence: Race, sexuality, and the US state* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn, 'Trans necropolitics: A transnational reflection on violence, death, and the trans of color afterlife', In: eds. Susan Stryker and Aren Aizura, *The Transgender Studies Reader, 2nd edition* (New York: Routledge, 2013): 66-76.

⁵³ See Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument', *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.

beneficial to both national and societal security. Through painstaking empirical work, Amar traces how military and police security apparatuses and associated parastate actors consolidate and expand their reach and authority by constructing stigmatized sexualities and gender expressions as threats to moral security and public safety.

Amar argues that in the wake of recent global financial crises and resistance to predations of capitalist markets, states find it increasingly difficult to govern via market forces and the promotion of 'market-state logics', however 'security-state logics are doing fine.'⁵⁴ These security logics are fostered through the promotion of the doctrine of human security. Doctrines of human security 'promise to reconcile human rights and national security interests, rebalance humanitarianism and militarism, and expand the notion of politics to reintegrate social justice and economic development.'⁵⁵ And yet the new doctrines of human security do not challenge 'the primacy of security discourse itself.'⁵⁶

Amar identifies 'a particular Global South variant' of the human security doctrine. At the centre of (human) security operations are humanitarian and cultural rescue campaigns in defence of 'cultural heritage and developmental infrastructure' from perverted 'cultures of globalization.'⁵⁷ These rescue narratives are always tied to concerns about (non-)normative sexuality and gender. The subjects ostensibly protected by human-security regimes 'are portrayed as victimized by trafficking, prostituted by "cultures of globalization," sexually harassed by "street" forms of predatory masculinity, or "debauched" by liberal values.' Amar argues that these subjects of rescue cannot be adequately grasped if they are understood as mere human rights holders. Rather, these subjectivities 'should be more accurately analyzed as human-security products merging in particular gender, racial, and transnational forms in and around military and police operations and parastatal security projects.'⁵⁸ Importantly, these subjects were not

⁵⁴ Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013): 14.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 26-7.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 14-5.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 15.

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conceived 'in the headquarters of the UN or in the humanitarian agencies of the Global North, but in a belt of the world that we used to call the semiperiphery.'⁵⁹

These new security regimes emerged in the context of struggles between military and police with 'mass movements around morality, sexuality, and labor.'⁶⁰ The clashes between these various actors led to appropriations and convergences between ultra-conservative and progressive social movements, and self-identified progressive and conservative security doctrines. Amar's queer analysis of the politics and struggles around the promise of human security demonstrates the central role of processes of moral-sexual subjectification – again, in contrast to the (liberal) LGBT IR perspective, which assumes pre-given, rights-seeking LGBT subjects. The book offers a stunning account of how these new security regimes operate via logics and circuits of power beyond binary notions of the 'either/or;' they act as laboratories *and* factories for novel formations of global security governance⁶¹ and cannot be reduced to heteropatriarchal and racist rescue fantasies.

Rahul Rao's book *Third World Protest* takes up the problématique of tracing the operations of international power beyond 'either/or' logics in the context of political protest and imaginaries of resistance in the so-called Third World. The book critically explores two of the most influential normative orientations in international relations, cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Challenging analytics of power-versus-resistance, Rao asks:

But what if things are more complicated, less dichotomous? Are the binary distinctions that we routinely draw – between proletariat and capital, multitude and empire, 'us' and 'them' in an array of different contexts – really up to describing a world in which the evils and misfortunes of human rights abuse and bad governance may be the result of a more complex topography of agents linked to one another across territorial and non-territorial boundaries?⁶²

⁵⁹ Ibid.
⁶⁰ Ibid.
⁶¹ Ibid., 244.
⁶² Rahul Rao, *Third World Protest: Between Home and the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 2.

Part of Rao's investigation focuses on the dilemmas faced by Third World queer rights activists and queer activists of colour in the face of 1) hegemonic actors promoting LGBT rights and people for regressive economic and (geo)political projects and 2) racist and colonial desires shaping LGBT activism in the West ('white gays to save brown gays from brown homophobes'⁶³). Echoing queer critiques of LGBT rights having become 'a marker of modernity', Rao identifies transformations of international power and the rise of 'new hierarchies' that cannot be grasped by what he views as monolithic accounts of power in this literature.⁶⁴ He argues that 'there is no single politics'⁶⁵ - neither to global LGBT social movements nor to the mobilization of LGBT rights by a growing number of states, international organizations and corporate actors.

Part and parcel of the complex and dynamic political terrains of queer struggles in the Global South are the modernist ambitions of certain Third World elites.⁶⁶ During the heyday of modern European imperialism, the failure of an unambiguous national heterosexism in many colonized societies was read as a marker for civilizational backwardness, and typically shaped anti-colonial resistance movements and later the gendered and heteronormative construction of most postcolonial nations. Today 'the exact opposite has become true.'⁶⁷ Rao argues that it is in the context of these geo/political and economic contestations that some states and corporate actors in the Global South – including in India – have strategically mobilized LGBT rights as a vehicle to join 'their rightful place at the table of great powers.'⁶⁸

One of the most prominent indictments of current global queer activism is Joseph Massad's *Desiring Arabs*, in which (among other things) Massad posits the existence of a 'Gay International' – Western-based LGBT activism and organizations animated by colonial desires and imperial ambitions. While Rao agrees with Massad that current LGBT human rights politics

⁶³ Ibid., 182.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 174.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 177.

⁶⁶ Rao, Third World Protest.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 180.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 194.

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are all too often entangled with racist and imperial politics, he argues that these efforts cannot be dismissed as simply driven 'by racist [and colonial] rescue fantasies and as therefore irredeemable.'⁶⁹ Rao challenges Massad also over his wholesale dismissal of Arab activists using – and in fact inhabiting – Western sexual ontologies such as 'LGBT.' Massad argues that the rise of identity-based LGBT activism among class-privileged Arabs is not only paving the way for Western cultural imperialism, but actively incites state-repression which shuts down existing spaces for 'traditional' same-sex practices between Arab men.⁷⁰ While sympathetic to Massad's critique of 'cosmopolitan rescue politics and its local interlocutors', Rao challenges Massad for his slippage 'into a reinforcement of communitarian authenticity narratives that police how sexual preferences ought to be expressed.'⁷¹

Rao's research of sexuality politics and various queer social movements in India, Iran and the 'West' shows that the Gay International is 'an extraordinarily fractious space.'⁷² His analysis is based on the premise that 'there is no singular locus of threat'⁷³ to Third World protest and political struggles. Western imperialism is only part of the story. Rao argues that 'it is vital that we not lose sight of the reality of homophobia in the Third World (or indeed anywhere).'⁷⁴ He points out the irony of 'the very incompleteness of (US American gay subjects) inclusion within the US nation' and locates their LGBT activism internationally within the desire to belong domestically.⁷⁵

The notion that international LGBT politics are trapped between the Scylla of the universality of Western sexual and gender ontologies and struggles, and the Charybdis of equating LGBT rights and struggles with Western cultural imperialism, is challenged also by two of the chapters in Picq and Thiel's edited volume. Drawing on Gurinder Bhambra's work on 'connected

⁶⁹ Richter-Montpetit and Weber. 'Queer International Relations', 9.
⁷⁰ Amar, *The Security Archipelago*, 176.
⁷¹ Rao, *Third World Protest*, 177.
⁷² *Ibid.*, 189.
⁷³ *Ibid.*, 4.
⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.
⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

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3 histories,⁷⁶ Momin Rahman criticizes Massad's thesis of the Gay International for 1) assuming
4 'cultural exclusivity between West and East', and 2) ascribing 'ownership' of modernity to the
5 West. Massad's postcolonial analysis thus 'unwittingly replays the prioritization of the West' by
6 suggesting that Arab countries follow these 'modernization patterns'.⁷⁷ Rahman's discussion of
7 the politics of contemporary global LGBT rights struggles echoes the existing queer literature on
8 homonationalism and gay imperialism that views the rise of global Islamophobia as a central
9 condition of possibility for the internationalization of gay rights discourses. However his analysis
10 pushes beyond the usual focus of these debates on the racism of Western states and LGBT
11 organizations. Rahman theorizes the formation of what he terms 'Muslim homophobia' by
12 situating Muslim identities and homophobia in the context of aggressive Islamophobia 'rather
13 than reduce it to a preexisting component of a pre-modern, monolithic Islamic culture'.⁷⁸

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26 In his detailed case study of the role of the LGBT movement in Turkey's Gezi park protests,
27 Mehmet Sinan Birdal also challenges Massad's erasure of the agency and political ambitions of
28 non-Western LGBT social movements.⁷⁹ Birdal analyses the success of the LGBT movement in
29 Gezi protests with the help of World-Systems theory. The chapter traces how LGBT activists
30 formed powerful alliances with other social movements and thereby were able to advance their
31 political agenda. Birdal connects the rise and diffusion of LGBT identities to the world economy
32 and interstate system, not just 'Western' culture. He argues that global capitalism can give rise
33 to transformative or antisystemic LGBT identities 'and not merely agents of [the] Gay
34 International'.⁸⁰

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49 ⁷⁶ Gurminder Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination*,
50 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

51 ⁷⁷ Momin Rahman, 'Sexual Diffusions and Conceptual Confusions: Muslim Homophobia and
52 Muslim Homosexualities in the Context of Modernity.' In *Sexualities in World Politics*. (Oxon and
53 New York: Routledge, 2015): 99.

54 ⁷⁸ Ibid., 96.

55 ⁷⁹ Mehmet Sinan Birdal, 'Between the Universal and the Particular: The Politics of Recognition of
56 LGBT Rights in Turkey.' In *Sexualities in World Politics: How LGBTQ Claims Shape International
57 Relations*, eds Picq and Thiel, (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2015): 124–38.

58 ⁸⁰ Ibid., 136.
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While Queer theory is often associated with poststructuralism and specifically deconstruction and discourse analysis, much of the Queer IR literature of the 2000s in fact is chiefly concerned with questions of capitalism, development policy and international political economy more broadly, and from a range of historical materialist and non-Marxist materialist approaches.⁸¹ This literature explores how struggles over sexual politics are not simply ‘culture wars’ rooted in different moral frameworks. In conversation with Feminist IPE, materialist queer IR scholarship demonstrates that the organization of sexuality and gender formations continues to be fundamental to the reproduction of the global capitalist order.

For instance, Rahul Rao’s most recent work on ‘global homocapitalism’ critically explores efforts by IMF and World Bank to quantify the negative effects of homophobia on economic growth. Rao challenges the underlying view that homophobia is ‘merely cultural’ – a view of course that also informs the racist imaginative geographies of gay-friendly vs. homophobic societies structuring many of the prominent human rights and geopolitical struggles discussed earlier. Rao argues that relegating anti-LGBT sentiments and politics in the Third World to the realm of the cultural enables those very actors ‘to obscure the material conditions that incubate homophobic moral panics, and their own culpability in co-producing those conditions.’⁸²

Rao’s research on IFI initiatives against homophobia in Uganda and India traces the ways in which neoliberal development policies contributed to the material conditions that have given way to homophobic moral panics in both countries. He connects Uganda’s notorious ‘kill-the-gays-bill’ and the rise of a sweeping, aggressively anti-queer agenda to the dramatic ascendancy of Pentecostal Christianity. However, rather than simply reading these political developments as driven by either Uganda’s ‘culture’ or foreign Christian fundamentalists, Rao shows how this agenda became possible as a result of neoliberal restructuring. IMF-imposed austerity and privatization measures led the shrinking state to delegate crucial social services like health care

⁸¹ Bedford, *Developing Partnerships*; Bergeron, ‘An Interpretive Analytics to Move Caring Labor Off the Straight Path’; Griffin, ‘Sexing the Economy in a Neo-Liberal World Order’; Lind and Share, ‘Queering Development’; Lind, ‘Querying Globalization’; Peterson, ‘How (the Meaning of) Gender Matters in Political Economy.’
⁸² Rao, ‘Global Homocapitalism’, 38.

and education to faith-based organizations, producing the material conditions for anti-LGBT politics.⁸³

While Queer IR refuses to limit itself to narrow notions of (homo)sexuality and queerness, there is very little engagement in the Queer IR literature with cissexism and transgender theory, and even less with systems of ableism and critical disability studies.⁸⁴ The few scholarly publications and blog pieces that take up the violences of binary gender regimes tend to cast trans people as 'transgressive and resisting of orthodox gender relations' and as "'raw materials'" to improve IR theory.⁸⁵ These forms of epistemic violence are connected to the failure to substantively engage with Transgender theory and theorists. All too often, the only or main entry point into these discussions is Judith Butler's early scholarship on the performativity of gender, particularly her first two books *Gender Trouble*⁸⁶ and *Bodies That Matter*⁸⁷, and the narrow and near exclusive focus on the spectacle of the airport body scanner.

Butler's work on the performative nature of gender, and the relationship between subjectivity and performativity, is sometimes erroneously understood as treating gender as a 'choice'.⁸⁸ Butler's famous conceptualization of gender as 'a stylized repetition of acts'⁸⁹ which 'constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self'⁹⁰ is firmly grounded in an analysis of the regulation of gender through (certain) societal norms and regimes of violence. However, Butler's engagement with transgender people and trans politics, in particular her discussion of transsexual discourses

⁸³ Rao, 'The Locations of Homophobia'; Rao, 'Global Homocapitalism'.

⁸⁴ One of the few exceptions is the work by Alison Howell. See Alison Howell, *Madness in International Relations: Psychology, Security, and the Global Governance of Mental Health* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2011); Howell, 'The Global Politics of Medicine.'

⁸⁵ Richter-Montpetit and Weber, 'Queer International Relations,' 21; see also Cynthia Weber, 'What Is Told Is Always in the Telling: Reflections on Faking It in 21st Century IR/Global Politics', *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 45, no. 1 (2016): 119–30.

⁸⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (Routledge: New York, 1990).

⁸⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, (Routledge: New York, 1993).

⁸⁸ For a thoughtful and nuanced defense of Butler's work on gender performativity, see Julie Serano, 'Julie Serano on Judith Butler', (11 September 2015), <http://juliaserano.blogspot.co.uk/2015/09/julia-serano-on-judith-butler.html>, last accessed 25 May 2017.

⁸⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 140.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

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and her writings on Jenny Livingstone’s notorious documentary ‘Paris is Burning’⁹¹ and the film ‘Boys Don’t Cry’, have generated trenchant criticisms by Trans theorists inside and outside the academy.⁹²

At the centre of these debates are Butler’s ‘reliance on the transgender figure to anchor the queer diagnosis of heteronormative sex/gender arrangements’ and ‘the intertwining of the categories of gender, identity and the human’ in her work more broadly.⁹³ Trish Salah’s assessment that Butler’s early books evoke trans people and politics as material for ‘larger philosophical arguments with non-trans theorists of sexual difference, both on the right and on the left’⁹⁴ applies also to queer interventions in IR theory that treat trans people as illustrative of how gender is neither fixed nor binary, and thus ‘as objects rather than subjects of discourse’^{95, 96}

Several trans theorists have connected this critique of Butler and Livingstone’s ‘Paris is Burning’ to larger concerns about queer methodologies and the ethics of queer research, in particular the question of positionality. Jay Prosser’s book *Second Skin* is among the most prominent interventions in Butler’s work on ‘Paris is Burning.’ In the words of Jin Haritaworn, Prosser links what he views as Butler’s misplaced

⁹¹ Livingstone’s 1990 documentary ‘Paris is Burning’ explores the lives of Black and Latinx gay men and transwomen involved in the Harlem ballroom culture of the 1980s. The documentary filmed by a White lesbian ciswoman was widely criticized among others for its White and cissexist gaze. See for instance: bell hooks, *Black looks: Race and representation* (Boston: South End, 1992). Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁹² For a critique of Butler’s work on ‘Paris is Burning’, see: Prosser, *Second Skins*. For critiques of Butler’s work more generally, see: Ki Namaste, ‘Tragic Misreadings: Queer Theory’s Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity’, In eds. Brett Beemyn and Mickey Eliason, *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Anthology* (New York: New York University Press, 1996): 183-203; Salah, ‘Undoing trans studies’, *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 17.

⁹³ Salah, ‘Undoing trans studies’.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 152.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 153.

⁹⁶ In a recent interview, Butler addresses some of these criticisms and distances herself from her earlier critique of transsexual discourses that advocate for a more conservative view of gender as ‘hard-wired.’ Butler notes: ‘Some trans people thought that in claiming that gender is performative that I was saying that it is all a fiction, and that a person’s felt sense of gender was therefore “unreal.” That was never my intention. I sought to expand our sense of what gender realities could be. But I think I needed to pay more attention to what people feel, how the primary experience of the body is registered, and the quite urgent and legitimate demand to have those aspects of sex recognized and supported. I did not mean to argue that gender is fluid and changeable (mine certainly is not).’

'inclusion' of trans identities under the queer umbrella' to 'Butler's failure to position herself and the filmmaker to privileges around whiteness, class, and non-transness, which gave them the material and discursive power to exclude the depicted working-class trans women of colour from an agentic and authentic femininity.⁹⁷

Informed by the anti-racist feminist principle of *positionality*, Haritaworn urges queer studies scholars 'to reflect on where we stand, to define our speaking positions and how they relate to others, especially those whom we claim to speak for.'⁹⁸ Methodologically, it would thus be fruitful for Queer IR research to engage with Haritaworn's caution about 'queering from above' rather than 'queering from below.'⁹⁹

For instance, in a recent article titled 'Practising Gender, Queering Theory', Lauren Wilcox takes to task prominent IR scholarship associated with the 'practice turn' for erasing feminist and queer scholarship and concerns with gender. Wilcox rightly challenges the literature's failure to theorize gender as a practice and its at best marginal engagement with Butler's concept of the performativity of gender. Wilcox seeks to push dominant ways of thinking about practices in International Relations, specifically 1) the facile notion of 'competency' in the literature, 2) the exclusion and marginality of transgender and gender-nonconforming people in IR theory and 3) the violences of cissexist security assemblages on transgender and gender-nonconforming people. Putting into conversation Butler's notion of gender performativity and Jack Halberstam's work on 'the queer art of failure', Wilcox argues that 'theorizing practice from the perspective of "gender failures" sheds light on the embedded exclusions within this literature.'¹⁰⁰

To illustrate her argument, Wilcox discusses the experiences of trans- and gender-nonforming people (or in her words, 'the experiences of trans- and gender non-conforming bodies') with 'the

⁹⁷ Haritaworn, 'Shifting Positionalities', 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁹ Haritaworn, 'Shifting Positionalities', 2.

¹⁰⁰ Lauren Wilcox, 'Practising gender, queering theory' *Review of International Studies* (2017): 1.

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“problem” of practising gender in airport security assemblages.¹⁰¹ In a section titled ‘Trans-bodies as failures?’, Wilcox explores the experiences of transgender and gender-nonconforming travellers ‘as bodies that not only demonstrate the stakes of “failure” to practise gender, but also as potentially subversive bodies that demonstrate the instability of dichotomies between “success” and “failure” in the first place.’¹⁰² Discussing ‘the “mismatch” between embodiment and gender presentation’ among transgender and gender-nonconforming air travellers, Wilcox seeks to challenge the binary ways in which IR theory on the practice turn understands ‘gender’ as well as ‘competent’ practices. She writes: ‘In discussing the “problem” of practising gender in airport security assemblages, I argue that certain practices of gender can complicate the way in which gender as well as success and failure are understood in binary terms.’¹⁰³

While Wilcox draws attention to the erasure of transgender and gender-nonconforming people in international political life and IR theory as well as to the violent effects of cissexist security regimes, the overall argument and analysis are marred by some of the same shortcomings as Butler’s work. This includes the subsumption of ‘trans’ under the umbrella of ‘queer’; reading transgender people and gender-nonconforming people as ‘subversive bodies’¹⁰⁴ resistive to both gender normativities and security regimes as well as improving of IR theory. To come back to Haritaworn’s discussion of queer methodologies and research ethics, *Queer/Trans of Color* scholarship with its roots in Black and Women of Colour feminisms is particularly instructive for Queer IR in regards to questions of difference, positionality and genealogies of knowledge production.

Conclusion

Queer research demonstrates that sexuality and gender are important registers in the making and governing of subjects (people; states; organizations) and the international. The books under

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 4.
¹⁰² Ibid., 13.
¹⁰³ Ibid., 4.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 4.

review have produced rich and innovative analytical and empirical work on core IR concepts and concerns, including sovereignty, security, neoliberal development and (global and regional) hegemony. As firmly established by three decades of feminist scholarship, the masculine epistemological and ontological commitments of much of the discipline have traditionally led IR research to underestimate and or outright ignore fundamental dimensions of contemporary formations of global and international power. Queer IR echoes feminist analyses of the central role of practices, actors and social relations cast as merely 'personal,' 'private', or 'merely cultural' in orthodox and prominent non-feminist *critical* IR scholarship. These 'low politics' are often constitutive of the 'high politics' of states and markets. Queer research not only extends these feminist insights through registers of sexuality and queerness, but also challenges and reworks heteronormative and cissexist ontologies underwriting feminist IR.

Picq's and Thiel's criticism that queer research is limited to poststructuralist deconstruction, treats real world politics as secondary and leaves unchallenged 'material inequalities'¹⁰⁵ is not vindicated. Rather a wide range of theoretical and methodological commitments, including historical materialism and materialist postcolonial approaches, animate Queer IR scholarship. Thus, Queer IR research equally proves wrong queer voices that frame empirical research as inherently essentialising. Finally, poststructuralist queer scholarship, including Weber's *Queer IR*, has produced rich accounts of 'real world' geo/political struggles and contestations over sexual politics, including LGBT rights.

Returning to Picq and Thiel's critique of queer research as depoliticizing, if anything, queer scholarship would point to the analytical and political limitations of LGBT studies frameworks that limit the scope of the political to notions of 'discrimination', 'equal inclusion' and 'human rights' for leaving many fundamental structures of oppression, exploitation and violence unchallenged. The politics of inclusion and the notion that meaningful political activism is only possible based on 'identifiable categories to combat discrimination'¹⁰⁶ often come at the cost of

¹⁰⁵ Picq and Thiel, 'Introduction', 8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 6.

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LGBT subjects who sit in marginal relation to 'LGBT' in many complex ways. Simultaneously, the reviewed books make it clear that while queer is commonly associated with non-normative gender and sexual practices and subjectivities, 'queerness' and queer analytics cannot be conflated with transgression and anti-normativity. If anything, the books emphasize that there is nothing inherently progressive about queer. It is thus critical for Queer IR to pay close attention to questions of difference, positionality and the politics of citation¹⁰⁷ practices. In particular Queer/Trans of Colour scholarship has important lessons to offer to Queer IR in this regard.

To conclude, the emerging 'queer turn' in IR extends and reworks critical IR epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies. Engaging with queer scholarship will further expand and refine the notion of the political in IR, and help produce more complex and robust understandings of the operations of contemporary formations of international power, including beyond unhelpful binaries of power and resistance.

¹⁰⁷ As Sara Ahmed has noted (including in relationship to White feminisms), citation practices are 'a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies.' They are 'screening techniques' that allow 'certain bodies take up spaces by screening out the existence of others.' See also the 'Citation Practices Challenge': <http://www.criticalethnicstudiesjournal.org/citation-practices>